

Fouts Springs Youth Facilities

2004-2005 Grand Jury Report

I. Reason for Investigation

The California Penal Code §919(b) mandates that the Grand Jury inquire into the conditions and management of public detention facilities.

II. Procedure

The Grand Jury

- Toured Fouts Springs Youth Facility grounds and buildings
- Interviewed Fouts Springs Youth Facility staff and wards

III. Background

Fouts Springs Youth Facility is located at a remote site in the Mendocino National Forest in Colusa County on land leased from the Federal Government. The mission of the Fouts Springs Youth Facility is to protect society by restructuring unacceptable anti-social behavior of youth. The facility does this through a military type environment. Wards are supervised at all times and discipline and respect are taught. Wards are taught how to set and obtain goals and receive small awards (ribbons and certificates) that are positive incentives for changes in behavior. Wards are allowed one hour of family visitation per week. For many, this is their first lesson on how to be a productive member of society.

The facility is operated under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between Solano and Colusa counties. Since the 2003-2004 Grand Jury report, Placer County has terminated its membership in the JPA, effective July 1, 2004. On January 25, 2005, the Board of Supervisors amended and approved the JPA between Solano and Colusa County. Twenty-one other California counties may send juvenile wards to Fouts Springs. Under the JPA, Solano County is tasked as the administering county. This includes staffing, budgeting, accounting, purchasing and facility maintenance

Fouts Springs was established as an all-male facility for juveniles in 1959. It was designed as an alternative placement to the California Youth Authority (CYA). In May 2003, female wards became part of the Fouts Springs Program. Even though the female ward population is increasing statewide, the female programs were discontinued in November 2004 due to budget constraints.

The Colusa County Superintendent of Schools operates Neilson High School, located at Fouts Springs. The school has a 95% graduation rate and all wards are required to attend school. Most wards have an Individual Education Plan.

The Snow Mountain Academy program (Boot Camp) is a 90-day program concentrating on physical training, teamwork, substance abuse counseling, core academics, community service and military drill and ceremony. The Long Term Responsibility with Accountability and Achievement (LTRA) program provides a six-to-twelve month treatment option for delinquent male youth of the juvenile court and concentrates on changing behavior through a system of behavior modifications. This program is for those wards who otherwise would be placed in the CYA.

Fouts Springs has a capacity for 160 wards. At the time of the Grand Jury visit, there were 71 males and 7 females, the last class for the female wards. In order for Fouts Springs to remain economically viable, it must house more wards than are presently utilizing the facility.

IV. Findings and Recommendations

Finding #1: Fouts Springs is not being used to its designed capacity.

Recommendation #1a: In order for Fouts Springs to remain economically viable, the County and the Fouts Springs Superintendent need to develop more programs in order to utilize the facility to its capacity.

Recommendation #1b: The Grand Jury recommends that the Superintendent of Fouts Springs be allowed to make recommendations to the Juvenile Court Judges on the placement of wards at Fouts Springs.

Recommendation #1c: The County should be more proactive in contacting other counties and pointing out the advantages of Fouts Springs' placement.

Finding #2: The number of females in the juvenile court system has increased each year. However, the Fouts Springs program for females was terminated in November, 2004.

Recommendation # 2: The program that Fouts Springs provides is equally important to females and should be re-established.

V. Comments

The 2004-2005 Grand Jury finds the programs at Fouts Springs to be positive and provide goals that build the wards' self-esteem. The Grand Jury recommends that the next Grand Jury further inquire into the Fouts Springs Youth Facility and the JPA to determine why the facility is not being used to its capacity, and whether there are options that can address the needs of the wards and the county.

VI. Affected Agencies

- Superintendent, Fouts Springs Youth Facility

Courtesy copies:

- Colusa County Board of Supervisors
- Colusa County Department of Probation
- Solano County Legislators
- Solano County Board of Supervisors
- Solano Department of Probation
- Juvenile Courts, Solano, Colusa, and Placer counties